

12 **EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION**

21 Application number: 90105177.1

51 Int. Cl.⁵: A01M 9/00, A01C 15/00

22 Date of filing: 20.03.90

30 Priority: 27.03.89 US 329469

43 Date of publication of application:
03.10.90 Bulletin 90/40

84 Designated Contracting States:
AT BE CH DE DK ES FR GB GR IT LI LU NL SE

71 Applicant: **DEERE & COMPANY**
1 John Deere Road
Moline, Illinois 61265(US)

Applicant: **AMERICAN CYANAMID COMPANY**
1937 West Main Street P.O. Box 60
Stamford Connecticut 06904-0060(US)

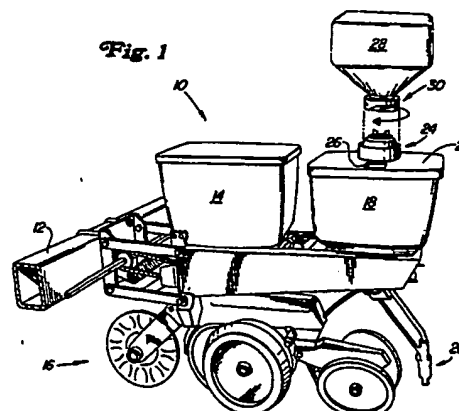
72 Inventor: **McCunn, Myron Lee**
1527 - 8th Street
Orion, Illinois 61273(US)
Inventor: **Landphair, Donald Keith**
3965 Wakonda Drive
Bettendorf, Iowa 52722(US)
Inventor: **Neyrinck, Richard Martin**
606 Cherry Street
Port Byron, Illinois 61275(US)
Inventor: **DePauw, Richard Arthur**

18 Deer Run
Moline, Illinois 61265(US)
Inventor: **Lundie, William Robert**
3645 - 8th Street
East Moline, Illinois 61244(US)
Inventor: **Brown, Douglas Paul**
5100 Coachman Road
Bettendorf, Iowa 52722(US)
Inventor: **Hoffman, Jeffrey Alan**
693 Waxwing Court
Westerville, Ohio 43081(US)
Inventor: **Tenne, Frank Douglas**
1100 Grenoble Road
Ivyland, Pennsylvania 18974(US)
Inventor: **Holverson, Patrick David**
11821 South Blackfoot Drive
Ahwatukee, Arizona 85044(US)
Inventor: **Woodruff, Keith**
1485 Force Drive
Mountainside, New Jersey 07849(US)

74 Representative: **Collins, Geoffrey Stainton et al**
c/o Reddie & Grose 16 Theobalds Road
London WC1X 8PL(GB)

54 **Applicator for dispensing flowable fertiliser, pesticide or the like.**

57 A closed granular chemical handling system has a dispensing valve (30) and a receiving valve (24). The dispensing valve (30) and the receiving valve (24) are automatically opened when the valves are coupled together, and are automatically closed when they are uncoupled from one another. The valves (30, 24) are configured so that the receiving valve (24) always is the first to open and the last to close. They are driven together by a camming structure (54, 58) having a neutral portion (82) that acts as a delay between the opening and closing of both valves (30, 24) so as to allow granular material to flow from between the valves (30, 24) through the receiving valve (24).



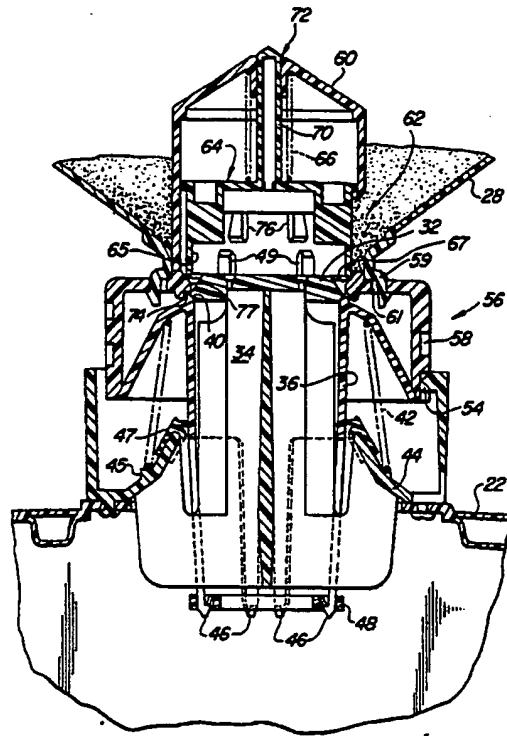


Fig. 3

Applicator for dispensing flowable fertiliser, pesticide or the like

The present invention relates to an applicator for dispensing flowable fertiliser, pesticide or like material comprising a chamber for the material and a material dispensing valve biased to a closed position

Agricultural planters are used for planting seeds in a field. Typically seeds are stored in a hopper and are dispensed from the hopper by a seed meter. To minimize the number of passes a farmer is required to make, a planter is usually provided with additional hoppers for holding fertilizer or granular chemical pesticides. These hoppers have chemical meters for controlling the flow of fertilizer and pesticide onto the field.

Some planters having a plurality of planting units are provided with a cross auger for directing granular fertilizer from a side loading point to individual hoppers. Liquid fertilizers have also been directed to individual tanks on a planter. In the liquid fertilizer system, as disclosed in US-A-4,244,522, liquid fertilizer in a mobile tanker is pumped through a hose to a manifold located on the planter. The hose is coupled to the planter at a coupling valve.

In many instances it is desirable for agricultural workers not to handle directly certain agricultural treatment agents, such as herbicides, insecticides or fertilizers. These agricultural treatment agents are typically delivered to the agricultural workers in sealed containers which must be opened to direct the chemicals to the hopper located on the planter.

To minimize exposure to these chemicals, it is frequently recommended for agricultural workers to wear various items of protective clothing, such as rubber gloves and respirators, when loading the planter with these chemicals. After a planting operation, some of the chemical packages may still contain unused chemicals. The empty packages and the remaining chemical must be stored or disposed of in an approved manner.

Typical valve systems for controlling the feed of a product from a container are disclosed in the following United States patents: 4,489,858, 4,164,307, 3,543,814, 3,446,403, 3,296,649, 3,187,965, 2,975,465, 2,210,206, 2,182,878, 1,934,197, and 1,257,910. The devices disclosed in the above-identified patents illustrate container valve assemblies mounted at the discharge openings of their respective containers for controlling the discharge of diverse materials such as powders, powdered soap, cleaning fluid, cosmetics, shoe polish, milk, coffee, and toner for copying machines. US-A-2,182,878 is of particular interest in that it discloses a portable container and valve system for manually applying granular agricultural

materials, such as fertilizers, in a home gardening procedure.

None of the devices disclosed in the above identified patents is directed to a safe handling system for large scale application of commercial quantities of granular agricultural treatment material from a container.

According to the present invention the applicator includes a container for the material, the chamber has a material receiving valve biased to the closed position, the container has the said material dispensing valve, and the dispensing and receiving valves are adapted to be coupled and uncoupled so that on being coupled the valves are both opened to allow material flow from the container to the chamber and on being uncoupled are both closed to prevent flow.

The following concerns a particular embodiment of the invention.

A closed handling system for a chemical product comprising two valves, a dispensing valve and a receiving valve, both of which are spring biased into a closed position. The valves automatically open when the dispensing valve is properly coupled to the receiving valve. When uncoupling the dispensing valve from the receiving valve both valves automatically close. A sequencing means opens the receiving valve first and closes the receiving valve last during coupling and uncoupling operations. A delay means delays the uncoupling of the valves so that the granular material has time to clear the valve structures and enter the open receiving valve.

The dispensing valve is mounted on a chemical package. The dispensing valve comprises a housing having a passage located inside the package and a sliding tubular portion located inside the housing. The housing is also provided with a first valve seat that cooperates with the sliding tubular portion to seal the valve and thereby the chemical package. A biasing spring is positioned between the tubular portion and the housing for biasing the tubular portion into contact with the first valve seat. The tubular portion is provided with a guide post that cooperates with a guide aperture formed in the housing for guiding the vertical movement of the tubular portion.

The receiving valve is mounted on an application means, such as a granular chemical hopper for an agricultural planter. The receiving valve comprises a stationary valve disc and a slidable sleeve having a valve seat that contacts the valve disc. The stationary valve disc is mounted to a tower that projects upwardly from the hopper. The tower is located inside the slidable sleeve and defines

passages through which a granular chemical can flow. The slidable sleeve is provided with a conical baffle that overlies a conical portion located on the hopper. A dust seal is mounted to the conical portion for wiping contact with the slidable sleeve. A biasing spring is positioned between the conical baffle and the conical portion for biasing the slidable sleeve towards the stationary disc.

The receiving valve is provided with an outer cup having upstanding walls and inwardly projecting lugs. The dispensing valve is provided with an inner cup having camming grooves. The inner cup is telescopically received in the outer cup of the receiving valve when coupling the valves together. The inwardly projecting lugs of the outer cup engage the camming grooves of the inner cup for driving the dispensing valve towards the receiving valve, as the valves are rotated relative to one another.

When coupling the valves to one another, the dispensing valve is positioned over the receiving valve and the cups are telescopically joined together. The dispensing valve is then rotated so that the inwardly projecting lugs on the outer cup engage the camming grooves on the inner cup driving the dispensing valve towards the receiving valve. As the dispensing valve is driven towards the receiving valve the inner cup engages the conical baffle of the receiving valve and drives it downwardly away from the stationary disc opening the receiving valve. After the receiving valve is opened, the dispensing valve is still closed. A closed conduit is formed between the dispensing valve and the receiving valve by the valve seat of the receiving valve engaging a second dispensing valve seat formed at the bottom of the dispensing valve housing. The dispensing valve is further rotated through a neutral portion of the camming groove, wherein the receiving valve remains open and the dispensing valve remains closed. As the dispensing valve is further rotated it encounters the opening portion of the camming groove where the dispensing valve is driven downwards towards the receiving valve. During the opening portion of the camming groove, the stationary disc engages the bottom of the valve member driving it upwards into the housing and away from the first dispensing valve seat. By driving the valve member away from the valve seat the dispensing valve is opened and granular chemical material is free to pour from the chemical package through the dispensing and receiving valves into the hopper.

When uncoupling the dispensing valve from the receiving valve the process is reversed. The dispensing valve is rotated relative to the receiving valve driving the dispensing valve upwards away from the receiving valve. At first the dispensing valve encounters the opening portion of the cam-

ming groove and ascends relative to the receiving valve. The valve member engages the first dispensing valve seat closing the dispensing valve. During the neutral portion of the camming groove the dispensing valve remains closed and the receiving valve remains open. Granular material located in the closed conduit formed between the valves is allowed to flow through the closed conduit and receiving valve into the hopper. The neutral portion providing a time delay in which the material can flow through the closed conduit. As the dispensing valve is further rotated in an uncoupling manner the dispensing valve is again driven away from the receiving valve closing the receiving valve.

As the dispensing valve is being uncoupled from the receiving valve, the slidable sleeve rises towards the stationary disc. The slidable sleeve thereby establishes a new fill level in the hopper. Thereby providing additional room, in a full hopper, for granular chemical located in the closed conduit formed between the valves.

The valve member and the stationary disc are rotatively locked together by cooperating projections. Therefore as the dispensing valve is rotated relative to the receiving valve, the valve member and stationary disc are locked together in a stationary position thereby providing a wiping action on the valve seats further clearing the granular material from the closed conduit by wiping it into the receiving valve.

The neutral portion of the camming groove provides the delay means for delaying the closing of the receiving valve when uncoupling the valves. The delay means provides time for granular chemical material to fall through receiving valve into the hopper. In addition, the delay means increases the length of wiping contact of the valve member and the stationary disc with the valve seats. The delay means is formed by a level section of the camming groove. This level section requires the operator to rotate the dispensing valve, approximately 69 degrees, in a level configuration before further closing the receiving valve.

The devices disclosed by the above-identified patents do not teach or suggest a system in which a dispensing valve assembly is adapted to interact with a complimentary receiving valve assembly on a hopper to assure that product will not flow from the container until the container is properly mounted on the hopper structure as in the above embodiment of the present invention. The prior art does not recognize a system in which a dispensing valve inter acts with a hopper mounted receiving valve having a time delay between the opening and closing of the valves to assure proper flow of the product and prevent leakage of the product before the container is removed from the hopper.

Such an embodiment of the invention will now be described with reference to the accompanying diagrammatic drawings in which:

Figure 1 is a perspective view of an agricultural planter having a closed granular chemical handling system;

Figure 2 is a cross sectional view of dispensing and receiving valves of the system;

Figures 3 - 5 are cross sectional views of the valve coupling and opening sequence;

Figure 6 is a bottom view of the dispensing valve taken along line 6-6 of Figure 2;

Figure 7 is a flat view of circular camming grooves of the dispensing valve;

Figure 8 is a top view of the receiving valve taken along line 8-8 of Figure 2;

Figure 9 is an exploded view of the receiving valve; and

Figure 10 is an exploded view of the dispensing valve.

Figure 1 is a perspective view of a single planting unit 10 mounted on toolbar 12. The planting unit can be of a conventional configuration and as such will only briefly be discussed. The planting unit is provided with a seed hopper 14 which is coupled to a seed meter (not shown) which direct seed to planting assembly 16. The planting assembly forms a furrow into which the seed is inserted and then closes the furrow.

The planting unit is also provided with a granular chemical hopper 18 having a granular chemical meter (not shown) for dispensing granular chemical to chemical applicator 20. The chemical meter can be of any conventional configuration, such as the one illustrated in US-A-4,582, 229, and which is incorporated herein by reference. Lid 22 of the chemical hopper 18 is provided with a receiving valve 24. In addition, the lid is provided with window 26 for viewing the contents of the hopper.

The chemical material typically loaded into the chemical hopper includes pesticides (e.g., insecticides, herbicides and fungicides) which can be applied as granules. The granular material is normally composed of a pesticide and a carrier which is (a) sorptive such as clays, (b) non-sorptive such as sand and limestone, or (c) resin particulates or beads such as polyvinyl chloride particles.

To add chemicals to the hopper a granular chemical package 28 having dispensing valve 30 is coupled to the receiving valve 24. The dispensing valve is coupled to the receiving valve by applying the dispensing valve to the receiving valve in a twisting clockwise motion. Although in the present embodiment a chemical package is coupled directly to a hopper, the chemical package could also be directly coupled to a receiving valve located immediately upstream from the chemical meter. In such a configuration, the chemical pack-

age itself would form the chemical hopper for the planter. However, by providing the receiving valve on the lid of the hopper the present closed handling system is more easily retrofitted onto existing planters.

This system can also be used for loading seed onto the planter. Chemicals may be directly applied to seed. In such applications, the seed could be added to the seed hopper using the present closed granular chemical handling system. When used in a seed application, the seed meter forms the metering valve and the planting assembly the application means.

The internal structure of the receiving valve and dispensing valve are best illustrated in Figures 2-5. The receiving valve is coupled to planter lid 22. The receiving valve comprises a stationary valve disc 32 that is mounted on tower 34. The tower comprises a cross shaped member which defines four passages through which granular chemical material can flow to the hopper. The receiving valve further comprises slidable sleeve 36 having conical baffle 38. The sleeve is provided with valve seat 40 which cooperates with stationary disc 32 to close the receiving valve. Biasing spring 42 is positioned between conical portion 44 and the underside of baffle 38 for driving the valve seat into contact with the stationary disc. The biasing spring is supported on landings 45 formed on the conical portion. Dust seal 47 is located between slidable sleeve 36 and conical portion 44. The dust seal is in wiping contact with the slidable sleeve to prevent dust and chemical granules from escaping from the hopper. The slidable sleeve has legs 46 that extend beneath the cross shaped members of the tower and are joined together by ring 48. The top of the stationary disc is provided with upwardly extending projections 49 which will be discussed in more detail below.

The receiving valve is also provided with outer cup 50 having upstanding walls 52 that are provided with inwardly projecting lugs 54. The outer cup is used for coupling the dispensing valve to the receiving valve. The outer cup telescopically receives inner cup 56 of the dispensing valve. The inner cup of the dispensing valve is provided with camming grooves 58, better illustrated in Figure 7, which engage the lugs 54 for driving the dispensing valve downwardly towards the receiving valve.

Dispensing valve 30 is mounted on the dispensing nozzle of chemical package 28 by connector elements 59 which engage slots 61 formed in the dispensing valve. The dispensing valve forms the dispensing assembly for the package. The dispensing valve comprises housing 60 having passage 62. Slidable valve member 64 having tubular skirt 65 is located inside the housing. Valve member 64 is biased downwardly by spring 66 so that

edge 67 of skirt 65 comes into contact with first valve seat 68. Valve seat 68 is inwardly canted to provide a sealing surface for outwardly canted edge 67. It has been found that it is desirable that edge 67 be a sharp edge so that it can cut through trapped granules when the valves are rotated through the neutral cam groove position. The top of the valve member is provided with guide 70 which cooperates with guide aperture 72 formed in housing 60 for guiding the vertical movement of the sliding valve member. Housing 60 forms an air pocket above valve member 64 so that granular chemical does not compact above member 64 preventing its opening.

As illustrated in Figure 3, when the dispensing valve is initially coupled to the receiving valve, receiving valve seat 40 engages a second valve seat 74 located beneath first valve seat 68 of the dispensing valve. When receiving valve seat 40 engages second valve seat 74 it forms a closed conduit for granular chemical material flowing from the dispensing valve to the receiving valve. Second valve seat 74 is provided with an overlapping lip 75, that shingles over receiving valve seat 40 to prevent chemical granules from lodging in the valve interface.

Dispensing valve 30 is provided with downwardly extending projections 76 which cooperate with upwardly extending projections 49 of receiving valve 24 to provide a locking means for preventing the rotation of valve member 64. This provides for a wiping action between valve member 64 and first dispensing valve seat 68 when dispensing valve 30 is being removed from receiving valve 24.

In removing the package from the planter, dispensing valve 30 is rotated anti-clockwise relative to receiving valve 24. Cooperating projections 49 and 76 lock valve member 64 to the stationary disc 32 thereby causing relative rotation between first dispensing valve seat 68 and valve member 64. This wiping action aids in closing dispensing valve 30 by wiping trapped granules from between valve member 64 and valve seat 68. Stationary disc 32 wipes granules away from annular edge 77 of the dispensing valve and valve seat 40 of the receiving valve when it descends into a closed position.

Camming groove 58 of dispensing valve 30 is best illustrated in Figure 7. The camming groove has three distinct portions: introduction portion 80, neutral portion 82 and opening portion 84. Introduction portion 80 is that portion where the lugs are introduced into the groove. During the introduction portion of the camming sequence, lug 54 enters introduction portion 80, as illustrated in Figure 3. Ramp 81 of introduction portion 80 drives dispensing valve 30 downwardly against receiving valve 24. This downward movement initially opens receiving valve 24 and joins valve seat 40 to second

dispensing valve seat 74, as illustrated in Figure 4. Neutral portion 82 of the camming groove is substantially level. The neutral portion maintains the Figure 4 configuration, that is the receiving valve is open and the dispensing valve is closed. In the neutral portion of the camming groove the dispensing valve is rotated approximately 69 degrees from the end of introduction portion 80 to the "pinning of opening portion 84. This provides a delay means in which the granular material has time to fall through the valve structures during the removal operation. In addition, this delay increases the duration of the wiping action of valve member 64 and stationary disc 32. Opening portion 84 is provided with ramp 85 which further drives dispensing valve 30 downwardly against the receiving valve 24.

During the opening portion of the camming sequence stationary disc 32 contacts the underside of valve member 64 driving slidable portion 64 away from first dispensing valve seat 68. Granular material in package 28 is then free to fall through passage 62 into the passages formed by cross shaped tower 34.

During the package removal operation, the package is rotated through opening portion 84 driving dispensing valve 30 upwards away from receiving valve 24. When the lugs of the receiving valve reach the neutral portion of the camming grooves the valves are in the configuration illustrated in Figure 4. Further rotation of dispensing valve 30 relative to receiving valve 24, through the neutral portion of the camming sequence, causes the wiping action between valve member 64 and first dispensing valve seat 68. After the lugs of the receiving valve 24 reach the introduction portion of the camming groove, receiving valve 24 is closed and the package can be removed.

Stationary disc 32 is received in tubular skirt 65 when slidable portion 64 is opened relative to valve seat 68. Therefore, whenever there is chemical flow through the dispensing valve, stationary disc 32 is elevated above valve edge 67 so that chemical granules are free to fall through the receiving valve as the dispensing valve is closing. In addition, as the dispensing valve closes slidable sleeve 36 moves upward allowing granular chemical in the closed conduit to flow away from the bottom of the sleeve into the hopper. This upward movement of the slidable sleeve facilitates the hopper accepting additional granular chemical located in the closed conduit when the hopper is full and the package is uncoupled.

It should be noted that lugs 54 and groove 58 can be arranged in a reversed configuration. That is, lugs 54 could be located on inner cup 56 and groove 58 located on outer cup 50.

Receiving valve 24 and dispensing valve 30 are arranged so that the receiving valve is the first

to open and last to close. The overall structure of the valves comprises a sequencing means which ensures that granular material will not be prematurely spilled through the dispensing valve before the receiving valve is opened. Similarly, closing the dispensing valve first, permits granular material trapped between the valves time to flow through the receiving valve into the hopper before the valves are disconnected.

The package can be removed from the hopper while still partially filled with granular material and will be automatically sealed by the operation of the dispensing valve.

A user first aligns the dispensing valve of the chemical package with the receiving valve of the application means. The user then couples the dispensing valve to the receiving valve. In the present embodiment, the coupling operation comprises rotating the chemical container relative to the receiving valve, however other coupling methods could be used. The system then automatically opens the receiving valve and the dispensing valve. The opening of the two valves is sequenced so that the receiving valve is automatically opened first.

The system delays the opening of the dispensing valve after the opening of the receiving valve by a predetermined coupling movement. In the embodiment described, the predetermined coupling movement comprises rotating the dispensing valve approximately 69 degrees through the neutral portion of the camming groove. After the granular chemical has been emptied into the application means, the dispensing valve is uncoupled from the receiving valve. The dispensing valve and the receiving valve are automatically closed during the uncoupling operation. The closing is sequenced so that the dispensing valve is closed first and the receiving valve is closed last. In addition, the closing of the receiving valve is delayed by the predetermined coupling movement so that granular material is allowed to flow from between the valves through the receiving valve and into the hopper. The valve seats of the receiving valve and the dispensing valve are wiped of granules during the delay.

In the preferred embodiment discussed above, the valves automatically open when correctly coupled to one another. However, the opening of the valves could be manually actuated after the valves are coupled to one another.

Claims

1. An applicator for dispensing flowable fertiliser, pesticide or like material comprising a chamber (18) for the material and a material dispensing valve (30) biased to a closed position characterised

in that the applicator includes a container (28) for the material, the chamber (18) has a material receiving valve (24) biased to the closed position, the container (28) has the said material dispensing valve (30), and the dispensing and receiving valves (30, 24) are adapted to be coupled and uncoupled so that on being coupled the valves (30, 24) are both opened to allow material flow from the container (28) to the chamber (18) and on being uncoupled are both closed to prevent flow.

2. An applicator according to claim 1 characterised in that on the valves (30, 28) being coupled the receiving valve (28) is opened before the dispensing valve (30), and on the valves (30, 28) being uncoupled the receiving valve (28) is closed after the dispensing valve (30).

3. An applicator according to claim 1 or 2 characterised in that the chamber comprises a storage hopper (18).

4. An applicator according to any preceding claim characterised in that the receiving valve (24) has a stationary valve disc (32) and a sliding sleeve (36) with a valve seat (40) biased to contact the disc (32), the receiving valve (24) being opened by the dispensing valve (30) moving the sleeve (36) out of contact with the disc (32).

5. An applicator according to claim 4 characterised in that the stationary disc (32) is mounted on a tower (34) projecting upwardly from the chamber (18), the tower (34) being located in the sleeve (36) and defining material flow passages.

6. An applicator according to claim 4 or 5 characterised in that the receiving valve (24) has a stationary conical portion (44) and the sleeve (36) has a conical baffle (38) which overlies the conical portion (44) and which is movable by the dispensing valve (30).

7. An applicator according to claim 6 characterised in that the bias for the sleeve (36) to contact the disc (32) is provided by a spring (42) between the conical portion (44) and the conical baffle (38).

8. An applicator according to any preceding claim in which the dispensing valve (30) has a housing (60) with a passage (62), the housing (60) is also provided with a first valve seat (68), a valve member (64) is positioned inside the housing (60) and is provided with a sharp edge (67) for contacting under the said bias (66) the first valve seat (68) thereby sealing the container (28), so that sliding the valve member (64) away from the first valve seat (68) allows material to flow through the passage (62) past the valve seat (68) and out of the container (28) characterised in that the housing (60) is located in the container (28).

9. An applicator according to any preceding claim characterised in that the receiving valve (24) is provided with an outer cup (50) having upstand-

ing walls (52), the dispensing valve (30) is provided with an inner cup (56), and the inner cup (56) is telescopically receivable into the outer cup (50).

10. An applicator according to claim 9 characterised in that the outer cup (50) is provided with inwardly projecting lugs (54) and the inner cup (56) is provided with camming grooves (58) which cooperate with the inwardly projecting lugs (54) for driving the dispensing valve (30) towards the receiving valve (24).

11. An applicator according to claims 4 and 8 to 10 characterised in that the stationary valve disc (32) is provided with upward extending projections (49) which cooperate with downward extending projections (76) of the valve member (64) when the dispensing valve (30) is coupled to the receiving valve (24) for rotatively locking the valve disc (32) to the valve member (64).

12. An applicator according to claim 11 characterised in that the housing (60) is provided with a second valve seat (74) which cooperates with the sliding sleeve (36) of the receiving valve (24) for forming a seal between the sliding sleeve (36) and the housing (60) when the receiving valve (24) and dispensing valve (30) are coupled together.

13. An applicator according to claim 12 characterised in that the valve seat (40) of the sliding sleeve (36) engages the second valve seat (74) forming the seal between the sliding sleeve (36) and the housing (60).

14. An applicator according to claim 2 in which the dispensing valve (30) has a housing (60) and a valve member (64) movable relative to the dispensing valve housing (60) between its said biased closed position and its open position characterised in that the receiving valve (24) has a housing (50, 32) and a valve member (36, 38) movable relative to the receiving valve housing (50, 32) between its said biased closed position and its open position, arranged so that, on coupling the valves (30, 24), as they draw together the dispensing valve housing (60) comes into abutment with the receiving valve member (36, 38) to shift it against its bias to open it and thereafter the receiving valve housing (50, 32) comes into abutment with the dispensing valve member (64) to shift it against its bias to open it, and, on uncoupling the valves (30, 24), as they draw apart the receiving valve housing (50, 32) comes out of abutment with the dispensing valve member (64) so that it closes and thereafter the dispensing valve housing (60) comes out of abutment with the receiving valve member (36, 38) so that it closes.

15. An applicator according to claim 14 characterised in that the housings (60, 50, 32) have screw means (58, 54) for coupling and uncoupling the dispensing and receiving valves (30, 24).

16. An applicator according to claim 15 charac-

terised in that the screw means (58, 54) are adapted so that, on coupling, an initial turning movement draws the housings (60, 50, 32) together to open the receiving valve member (36, 38), a further turning movement only turns the housings (60, 50, 32) relative to each other, and a final turning movement draws the housings (60, 50, 32) further together to open the dispensing valve member (64), and, on uncoupling, an initial opposite turning movement draws the housings (60, 50, 32) apart to close the dispensing valve member (64), a further opposite turning only turns the housings (60, 50, 32) relative to each other, and a final opposite turning movement draws the housings (60, 50, 32) further apart to close the receiving valve member (36, 38).

17. An applicator according to claims 15 or 16 characterised in that the screw means comprise camming grooves (58) on a said housing (60) and lugs (54) which are engageable with the grooves (58) and which are on the other said housing (50, 32).

18. A granular chemical applicator comprising:
application means for applying a granular chemical;
a metering valve operatively associated with the application means for controlling the flow of chemical to the application means;
a package for holding a chemical to be delivered to the metering valve;
a dispensing valve mounted to the package for controlling the flow of chemical from the package;
a receiving valve operatively associated with the metering valve for receiving chemical from the package through the dispensing valve and directing it to the metering valve, whereby when the dispensing valve is coupled to the receiving valve, both the dispensing valve and receiving valve are automatically opened, and when the dispensing valve is uncoupled from the receiving valve, both the dispensing valve and the receiving valve are automatically closed.

19. A granular chemical applicator as defined by claim 18 further comprising a sequencing means for opening the receiving valve first when the receiving valve is coupled to the dispensing valve.

20. A granular chemical applicator as defined by claim 18 further comprising a sequencing means for closing the receiving valve last when the dispensing valve is uncoupled from the receiving valve.

21. A granular chemical applicator as defined by claim 18 further comprising a hopper which is operatively positioned between the receiving valve and the metering valve for temporarily storing chemical to be used by the application means.

22. A granular chemical applicator as defined by claim 21 wherein the receiving valve comprises

a stationary valve disc and a sliding sleeve having a valve seat which contacts the disc, the receiving valve is opened by sliding the slidable sleeve away from the valve disc when the dispensing valve is coupled to the receiving valve.

23. A granular chemical applicator as defined by claim 22 wherein the stationary valve disc is mounted to a tower that projects upwardly from the hopper, the tower being located inside the slidable sleeve and defining passages through which a chemical can flow.

24. A granular chemical applicator as defined by claim 23 wherein the receiving valve is provided with a conical portion and the sliding sleeve is provided with a conical baffle that overlies the conical portion.

25. A granular chemical applicator as defined by claim 24 wherein a spring is positioned between the conical portion and the conical baffle for biasing the slidable sleeve upwardly into contact with the stationary valve disc.

26. A granular chemical applicator as defined by claim 25 wherein the dispensing valve contacts the conical baffle when the dispensing valve is coupled to the receiving valve, and the dispensing valve drives the slidable sleeve away from the valve disc by engaging the conical baffle.

27. A granular chemical applicator as defined by claim 25 wherein the dispensing valve comprises a housing having a passage, the housing is located inside the package, the housing is also provided with a first valve seat, a valve member is positioned inside the housing and is provided with a sharp edge for contacting the first valve seat thereby sealing the package, sliding the valve member away from the first valve seat allows chemical to flow through the passage past the valve seat and out of the package.

28. A granular chemical applicator as defined by claim 27 wherein a spring is positioned between the valve member and the housing for biasing the valve member in contact with the first valve seat.

29. A granular chemical applicator as defined by claim 28 wherein the valve member is provided with a guide post which cooperates with a guide aperture formed in the housing for guiding the movement of the valve member.

30. A granular chemical applicator as defined by claim 27 wherein the receiving valve is provided with an outer cup having upstanding walls, and the dispensing valve is provided with an inner cup, the inner cup is telescopically received into the outer cup.

31. A granular chemical applicator as defined by claim 30 wherein the outer cup is provided with inwardly projecting lugs and the inner cup is provided with camming grooves which cooperate with the inwardly projecting lugs for driving the

dispensing valve towards the receiving valve.

32. A granular chemical applicator as defined by claim 31 wherein the stationary valve disc is provided with upward extending projections which cooperate with downward extending projections of the valve member when the dispensing valve is coupled to the receiving valve for rotatively locking the valve disc to the valve member.

33. A granular chemical applicator as defined by claim 32 wherein the housing is provided with a second valve seat which cooperates with the sliding sleeve of the receiving valve for forming a seal between the sliding sleeve and the housing when the receiving valve and dispensing valve are coupled together.

34. A granular chemical applicator as defined by claim 33 wherein the valve seat of the sliding sleeve engages the second valve seat forming the seal between the sliding sleeve and the housing.

35. An agricultural unit comprising:

a frame;

a chemical hopper mounted to the frame for holding chemicals to be applied during an agricultural operation, the chemical hopper having a lid for enclosing the hopper;

application means mounted to the frame for applying the chemicals during an agricultural operation; a chemical metering valve operatively associated with the chemical hopper and application means for controlling the flow of chemical from the chemical hopper to the application means;

a receiving valve mounted to the lid of the hopper for receiving chemical from a chemical package, the receiving valve is biased closed and adapted to receive a cooperating dispensing valve on a chemical package.

36. An agricultural unit as defined by claim 35 wherein the receiving valve comprises a stationary valve disc and a slidable sleeve having a valve seat which contacts the disc, the receiving valve is opened by sliding the slidable sleeve away from the valve disc when the dispensing valve is coupled to the receiving valve.

37. An agricultural unit as defined by claim 36 wherein the stationary valve disc is mounted to a tower that projects upwardly from the hopper, the tower being located inside the slidable sleeve and defining passages through which a chemical can flow.

38. An agricultural unit as defined by claim 37 wherein the receiving valve is provided with a conical portion and the sliding sleeve is provided with a conical baffle that overlies the conical portion.

39. An agricultural unit as defined by claim 38 wherein a spring is positioned between the conical portion and the conical baffle for biasing the slidable sleeve upwardly into contact with the stationary valve disc.

40. A method of transferring a granular chemical from a package having a dispensing valve into an application means having a receiving valve which cooperates with the dispensing valve, the method comprising the steps:

aligning the dispensing valve of the chemical package with the receiving valve of the application means;

coupling the dispensing valve of the chemical package to the receiving valve of the application means;

automatically opening both the dispensing valve and the receiving valve when the dispensing valve and receiving valve are coupled together to direct chemical from the package to the application means;

uncoupling the dispensing valve from the receiving valve; and

automatically closing both the dispensing valve and the receiving valve when the dispensing valve and receiving valve are uncoupled from one another.

41. A method of transferring a granular chemical as defined by claim 40 comprising the additional step of sequencing the automatic opening of the dispensing valve and receiving valve so that the receiving valve is opened first.

42. A method of transferring a granular chemical as defined by claim 40 comprising the additional step of sequencing the automatic closing of the dispensing valve and receiving valve so that the receiving valve is closed last.

43. A method of transferring a granular chemical as defined by claim 42 comprising the additional step of delaying the automatic closing of the receiving valve after the automatic closing of the dispensing valve to allow granular chemical located between the valves to flow through the receiving valve.

44. A method of transferring a granular chemical as defined by claim 43 comprising the additional step of wiping granules from the valve seats of the dispensing and receiving valves while uncoupling the valves.

45. A dispensing valve for dispensing a granular chemical from a chemical container to an application means, the dispensing valve comprising: a housing having a passage and a first valve seat; a valve member slidably positioned in the housing, the valve member having a sharp edge that engages the first valve seat for sealing the dispensing valve by blocking the passage of the housing; means for biasing the valve member into a closed position;

means for coupling the dispensing valve to a receiving valve; and

means for engaging a receiving valve on an application means for automatically opening a receiving valve when the dispensing valve is coupled to a

receiving valve and automatically closing a receiving valve when the dispensing valve is uncoupled from a receiving valve.

46. A dispensing valve as defined by claim 45 wherein the means for biasing comprises a spring that is positioned between the housing and the valve member.

47. A dispensing valve as defined by claim 46 wherein the means for coupling comprises a camming groove for the driving the dispensing valve towards a receiving valve.

48. A dispensing valve as defined by claim 47 wherein the camming groove is provided with a neutral portion for delaying the coupling and uncoupling of the dispensing valve from a receiving valve.

49. A dispensing valve as defined by claim 48 further comprising an inner cup on which is located the camming groove and which also defines the means for automatically opening.

50. A dispensing valve as defined by claim 46 wherein the valve member is provided with a guide post and the housing with a cooperating guide aperture for guiding the movement of the valve member.

51. A dispensing valve as defined by claim 46 wherein the valve member is provided with locking projection for cooperating with a receiving valve for preventing the rotation of the valve member relative to the housing when the dispensing valve is being rotated when coupled to and uncoupled from a receiving valve.

52. A granular chemical applicator comprising: application means for applying a granular chemical; a metering valve operatively associated with the application means for controlling the flow of chemical to the application means; a package for holding a chemical to be delivered to the metering valve; a dispensing valve mounted to the package for controlling the flow of chemical from the package; a receiving valve operatively associated with the metering valve for receiving chemical from the package through the dispensing valve and directing it to the metering valve;

a sequencing means for opening the receiving valve first and closing the receiving valve last when directing granular chemical from the dispensing valve to the receiving valve.

53. A granular chemical applicator as defined by claim 52 wherein the receiving valve comprises a stationary valve disc and a sliding sleeve having a valve seat which contacts the disc, the receiving valve is opened by sliding the slidable sleeve away from the valve disc when the dispensing valve is coupled to the receiving valve.

54. A granular chemical applicator as defined by claim 53 wherein the stationary valve disc is mounted to a tower that projects upwardly from the

hopper, the tower being located inside the slidable sleeve and defining passages through which a chemical can flow.

55. A granular chemical applicator as defined by claim 54 wherein the receiving valve is provided with a conical portion and the sliding sleeve is provided with a conical baffle that overlies the conical portion.

56. A granular chemical applicator as defined by claim 55 wherein a spring is positioned between the conical portion and the conical baffle for biasing the slidable sleeve upwardly into contact with the stationary valve disc.

57. A granular chemical applicator as defined by claim 56 wherein the dispensing valve contacts the conical baffle when the dispensing valve is coupled to the receiving valve, and the dispensing valve drives the slidable sleeve away from the valve disc by engaging the conical baffle.

58. A granular chemical applicator as defined by claim 57 wherein the dispensing valve comprises a housing having a passage, the housing is located inside the package, the housing is also provided with a first valve seat, a valve member is positioned inside the housing and is provided with a sharp edge for contacting the first valve seat thereby sealing the package, sliding the valve member away from the first valve seat allows chemical to flow through the passage past the valve seat and out of the package.

59. A granular chemical applicator as defined by claim 58 wherein a spring is positioned between the tubular portion and the housing for biasing the tubular portion in contact with the first valve seat.

60. A granular chemical applicator as defined by claim 59 wherein the valve member is provided with a guide post which cooperates with a guide aperture formed in the housing for guiding the movement of the valve member.

61. A granular chemical applicator as defined by claim 58 wherein the receiving valve is provided with an outer cup having upstanding walls, and the dispensing valve is provided with an inner cup, the inner cup is telescopically received into the outer cup.

62. A granular chemical applicator as defined by claim 61 wherein the outer cup is provided with inwardly projecting lugs and the inner cup is provided with camming grooves which cooperate with the inwardly projecting lugs for driving the dispensing valve towards the receiving valve.

63. A granular chemical applicator as defined by claim 62 wherein the stationary valve disc is provided with upward extending projections which cooperate with downward extending projections of the valve member when the dispensing valve is coupled to the receiving valve for rotatively locking the valve disc to the valve member.

64. A granular chemical applicator as defined by claim 63 wherein the housing is provided with a second valve seat which cooperates with the sliding sleeve of the receiving valve for forming a seal between the sliding sleeve and the housing when the receiving valve and dispensing valve are coupled together.

65. A granular chemical applicator as defined by claim 64 wherein the valve seat of the sliding sleeve engages the second valve seat forming the seal between the sliding sleeve and the housing.

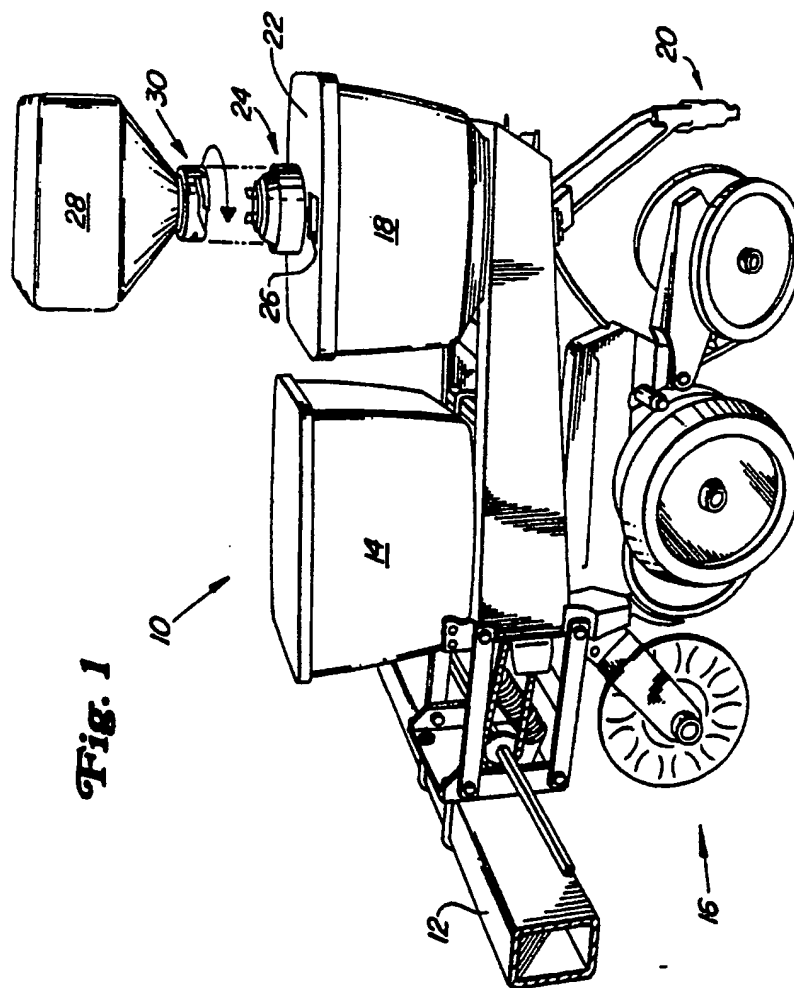
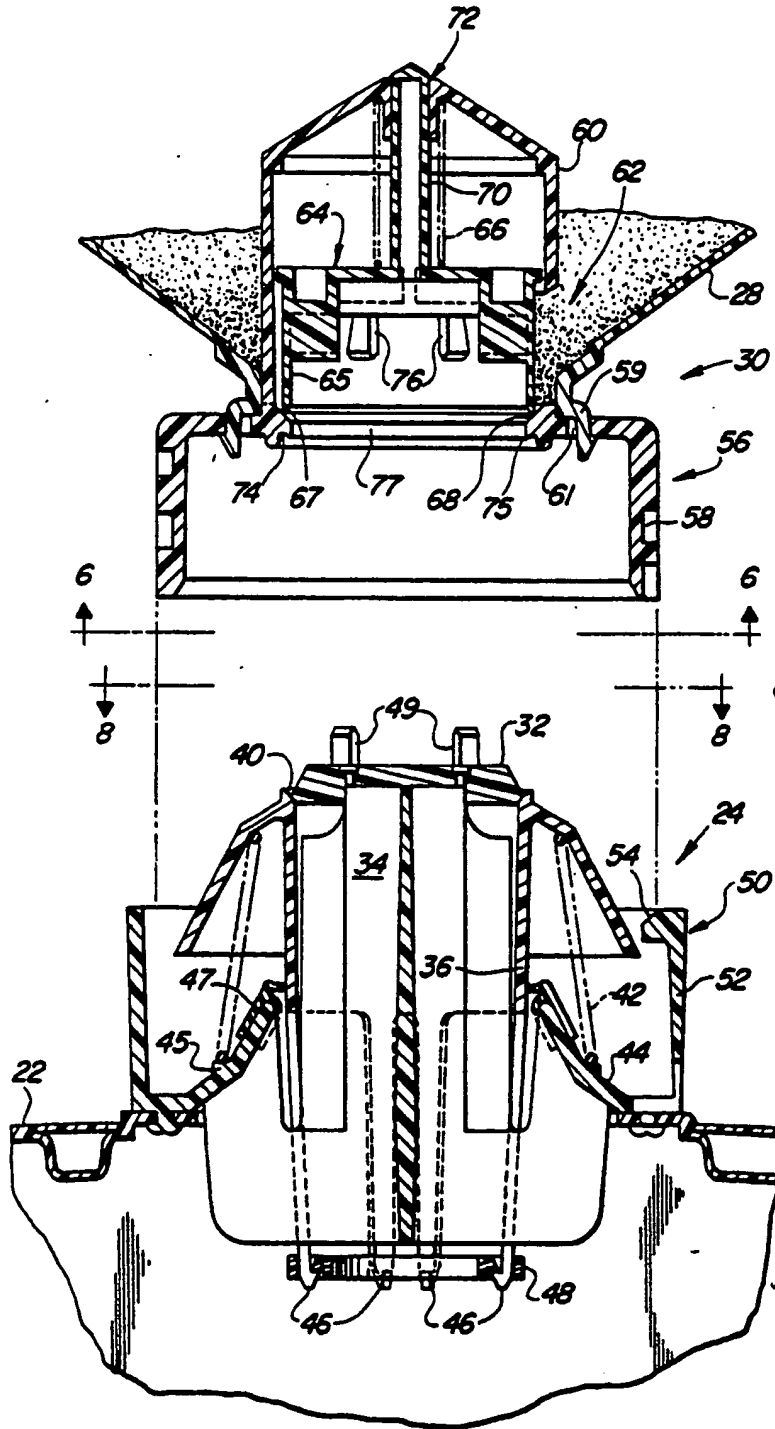


Fig. 1



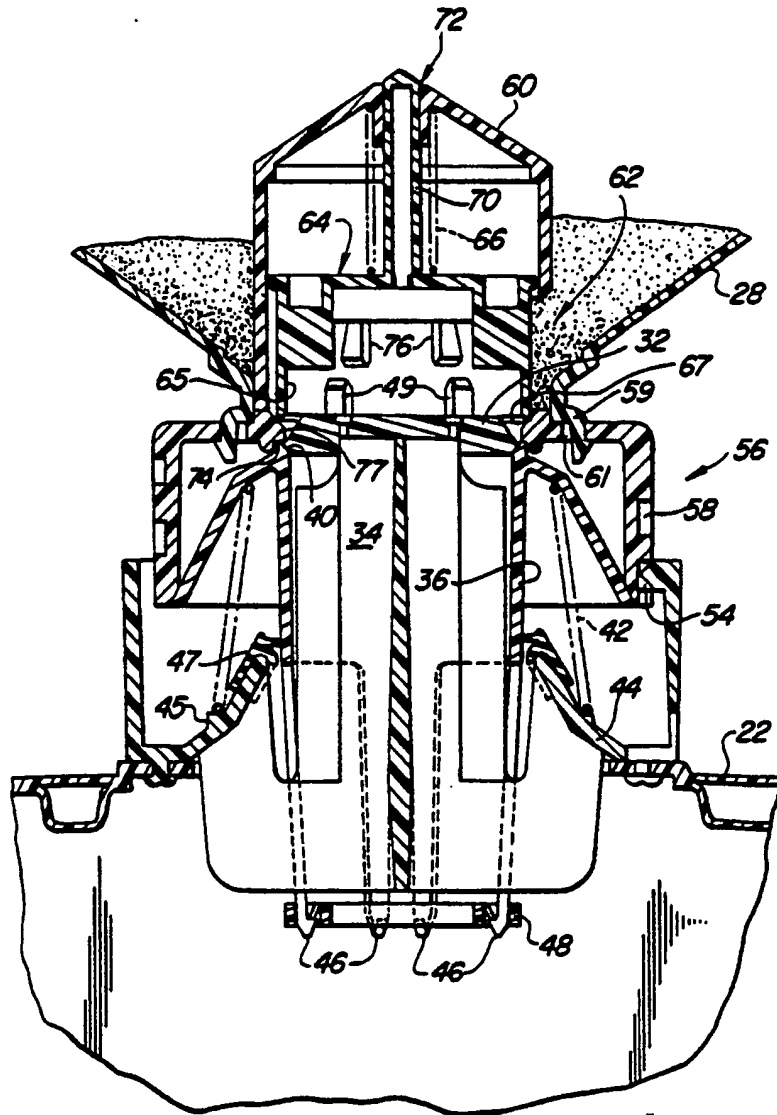


Fig. 3

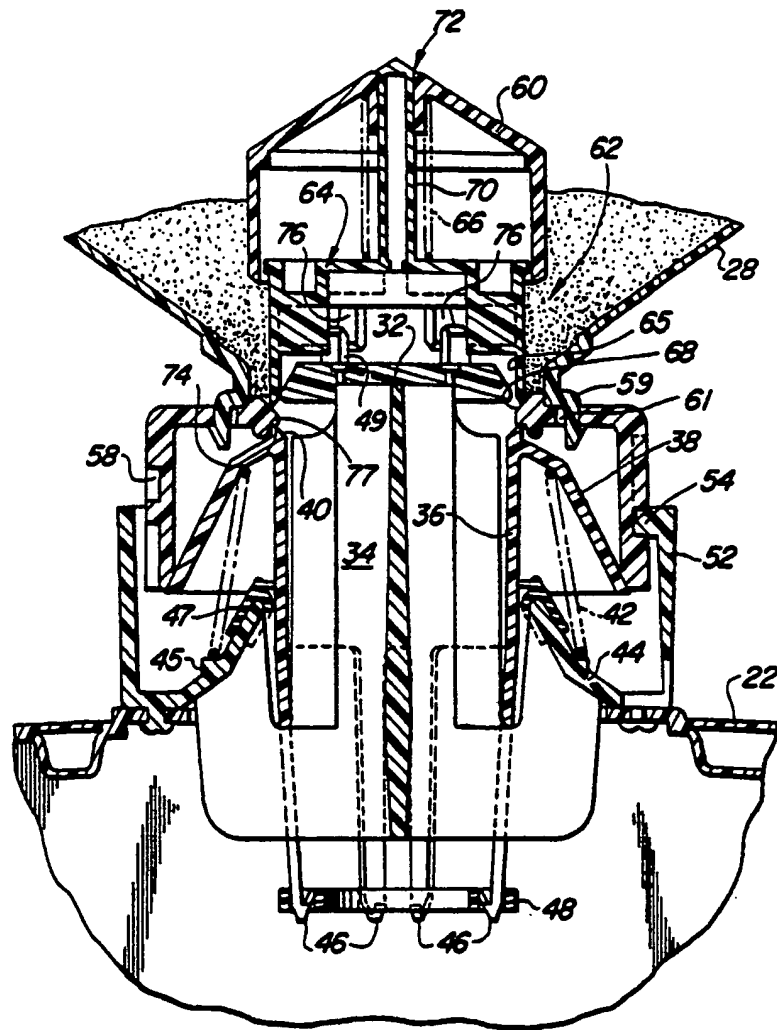


Fig. 4

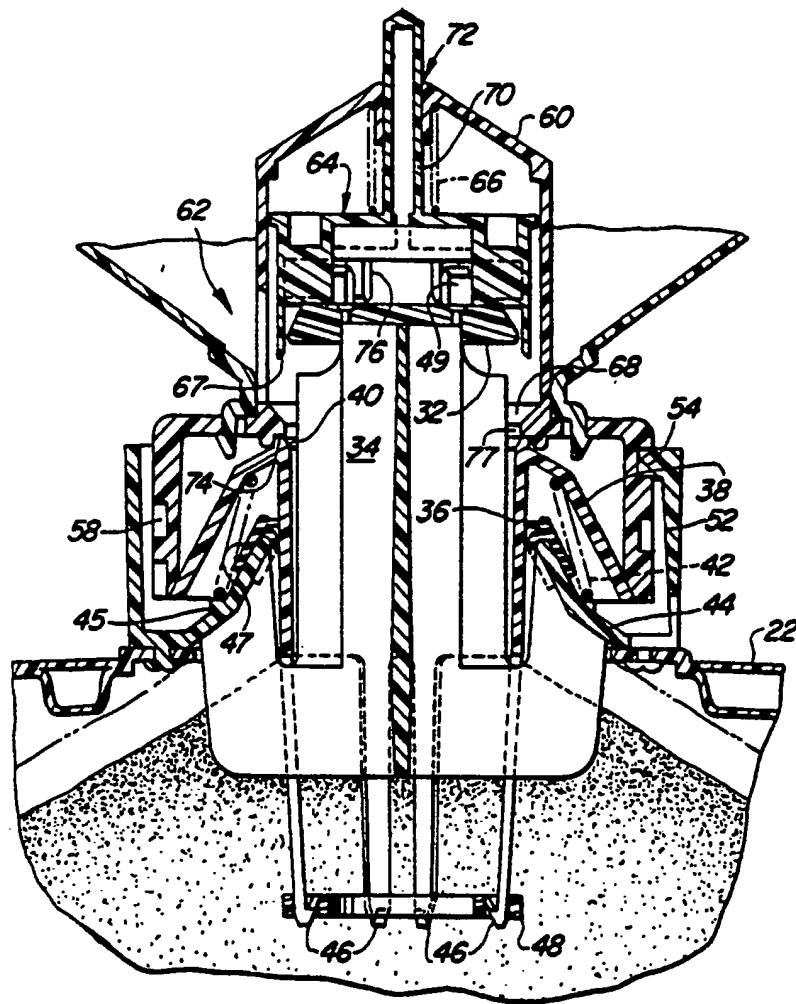


Fig. 5

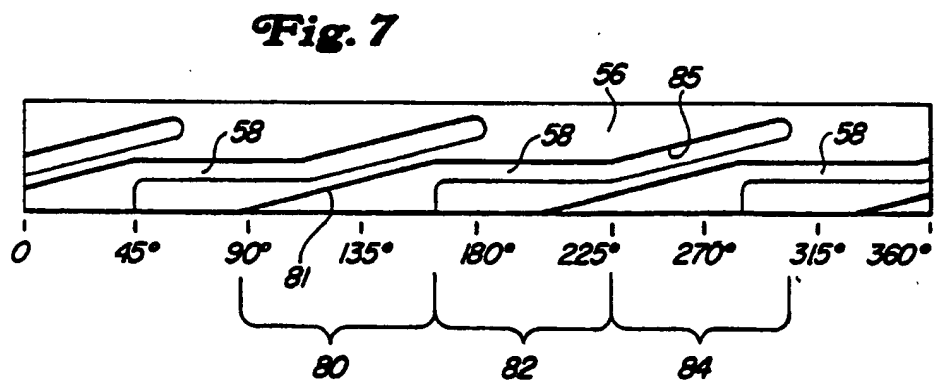
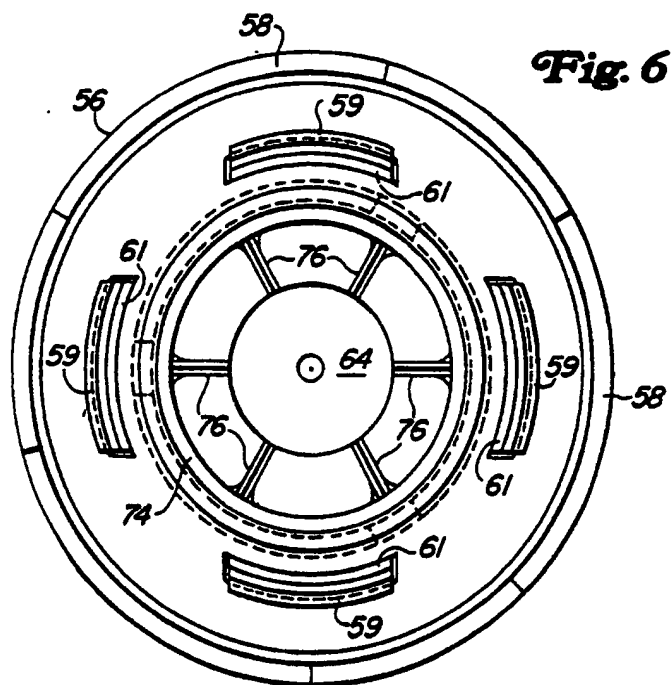


Fig. 8

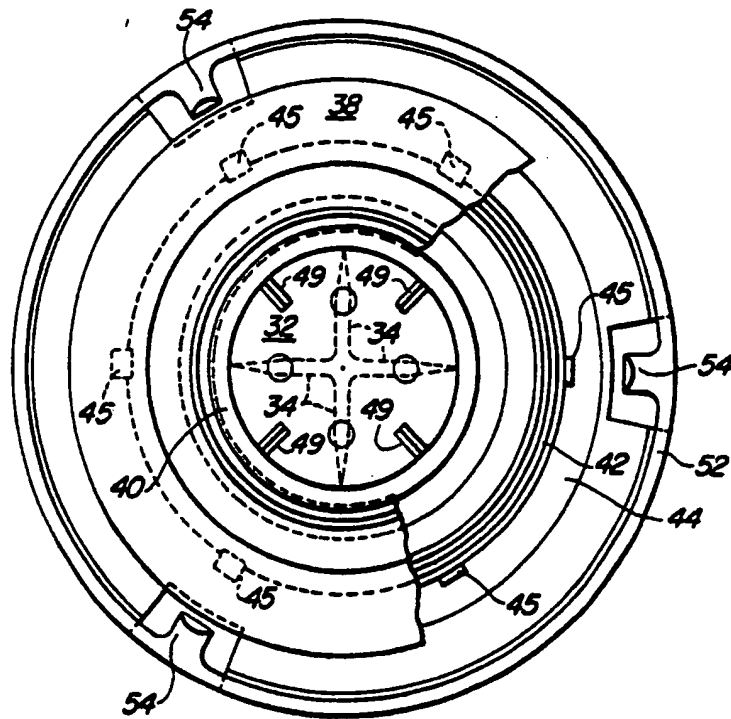
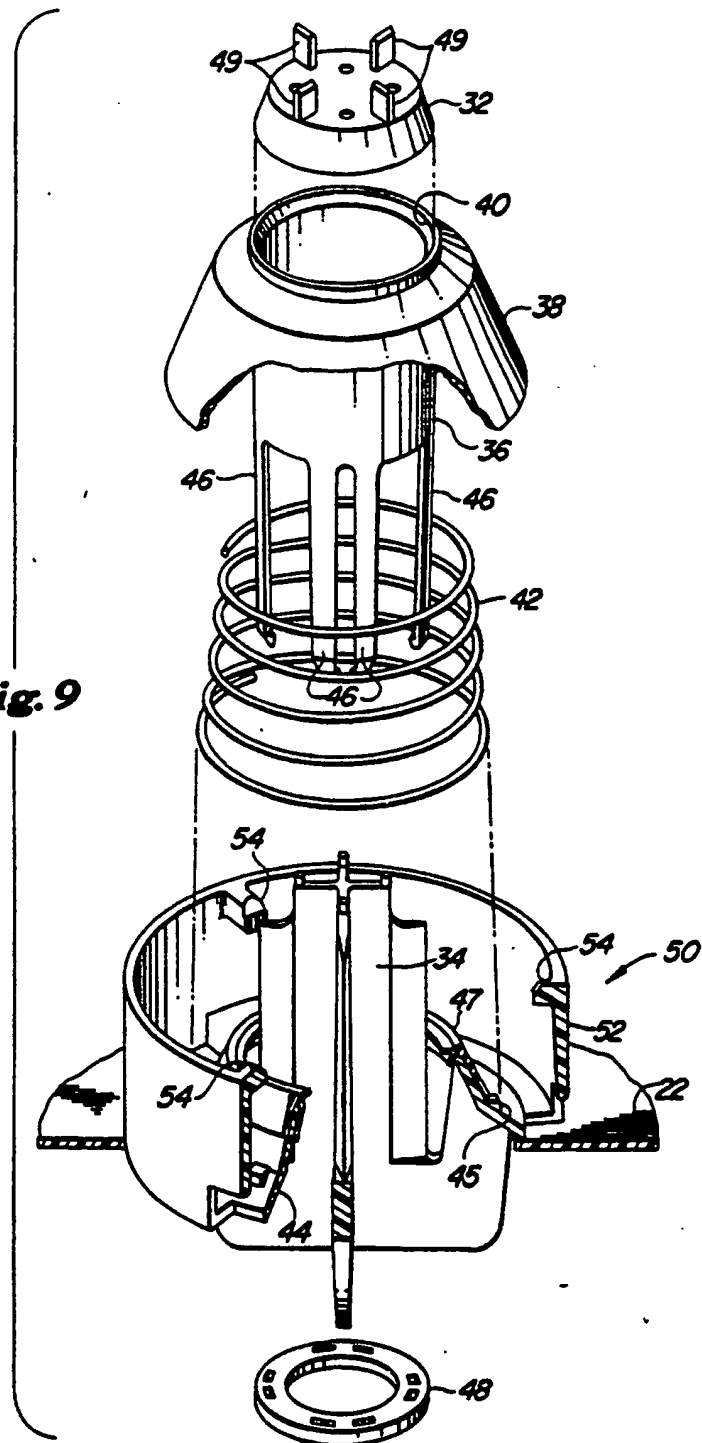


Fig. 9



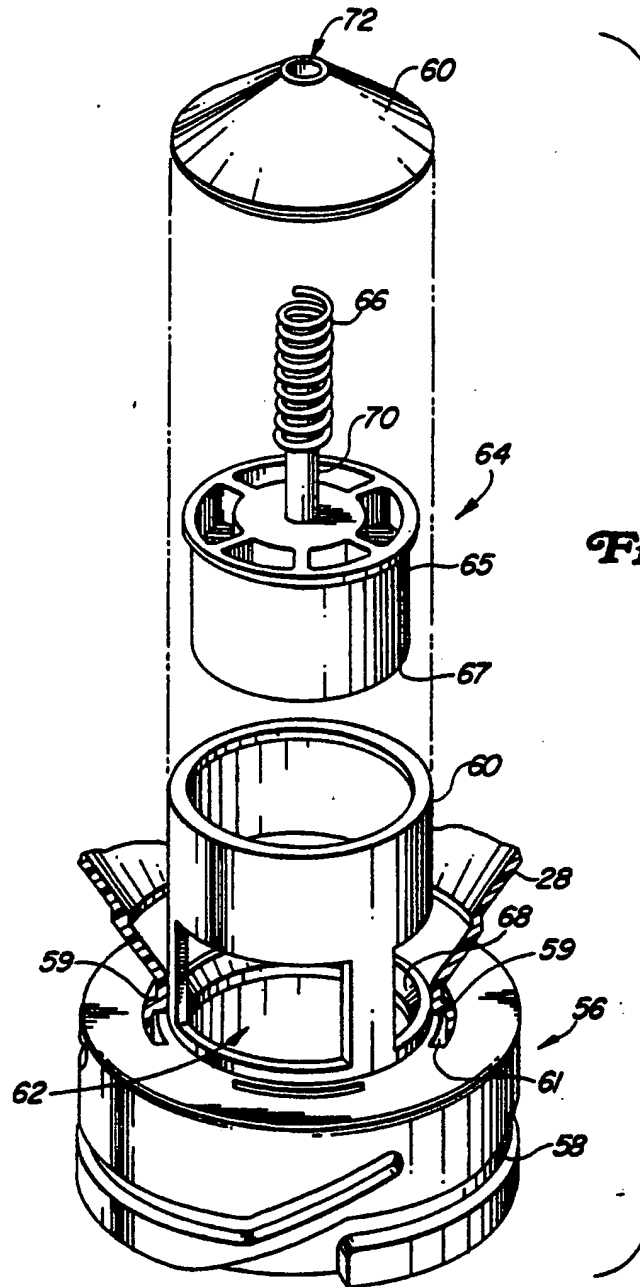


Fig. 10



European Patent
Office

EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application number

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			EP 90105177.1
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int. Cl. 7)
A	<u>EP - A1 - 0 086 031</u> (IMPERIAL CHEMICAL INDUS- TRIES PLL) * Page 3, lines 27-29; page 17, line 10 - page 18, line 20; page 28, line 32 - page 29, line 29; fig. 1, 6, 10 * --	1, 2, 8, 15, 18, 19, 35, 40, 52	A 01 M 9/00 A 01 C 15/00
A	<u>US - A - 4 306 685</u> (OFFEE) * Fig. 7 * -----	1	
			TECHNICAL FIELDS SEARCHED (Int. Cl. 7)
			A 01 C A 01 M B 05 B
The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search VIENNA		Date of completion of the search 04-07-1990	Examiner FESSLER
CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS			
X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document		T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document	

EPO Form 1503 (03.82)

BEST AVAILABLE COPY